



USDA COMMITS HISTORIC RESOURCES TO CONSERVATION ON PRIVATE WORKING LANDS: Important Opportunities for farmers in the American Flag Territories of the Western Pacific

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With the announcement of the passing of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 — the Farm Bill — USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Pacific Basin Director, Joan Perry shared that record-levels of support for environmental stewardship and conservation of working lands, “will help to ensure that our islands land and natural resources remain both healthy and productive.”

“The 2002 Farm Bill represents a strong and significant commitment of resources on the part of USDA in supporting conservation on private lands for the Pacific Basin,” Perry said. “This legislation was developed in response to a broad range of emerging natural resource challenges faced by farmers and ranchers nationwide and will provide important opportunities and incentives for farmers on Guam, the CNMI and American Samoa.”



Joan Perry, NRCS.

As USDA’s lead agency for conservation on private lands in the Pacific Basin, NRCS stands ready to work with our partners on Guam, American Samoa and the CNMI so they may benefit from the new portfolio of voluntary assistance programs, including cost share, incentive payments and conservation technical assistance. “The five years represents an important period in time for the development of sound, well managed conservation systems in the islands,” stated Perry.

A conservation farm plan provides a comprehensive document to record existing conditions on the farm, the landowner’s objectives and lays out the conservation practices the farmer needs to reach those goals. A conservation plan is the foundation upon which all USDA-NRCS services are to be based.

FARM BILL 2002

Three important provisions in the new FARM BILL are conservation programs:

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The Farm Bill reauthorizes the Environmental Quality Incentives Program through 2007. It adds \$5.6 billion in funding and program streamlining for the program. The EQIP provides technical and financial assistance to eligible producers to address soil, water and related natural resource concerns. It offers cost-share payments for implementation of eligible conservation practices and incentive payments for implementation of land management practices.

Resource Conservation and Development Program (RC&D)

The Farm Bill permanently reauthorizes the Resource Conservation and Development Program. The RC&D Program provides tools and technical support that helps local people improve their quality of life, address social, economic and environmental concerns and use natural resources wisely. The focus on local direction and control has made RC&D one of the most successful rural development programs of the Federal Government.

Conservation Security Program

The Farm Bill creates a new Conservation Security Program to financially recognize ongoing stewardship efforts and to help producers address additional resource concerns on agricultural working lands. The Farm Bill establishes the program for fiscal years 2003 through 2007.

New Initiatives

Also included in the Farm Bill are new initiatives that address challenges in water quality and quantity. A new ground and surface water conservation initiative will help farmers improve irrigation, grow less water-intensive crops or convert to dry land farming. A new grassroots source water protection initiative will provide for wellhead and groundwater protection by working with state programs.